



WESTFORD Massachusetts

Town Manager's Newsletter

November 2009



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"Our Board of Health and town staff are working diligently to attempt to protect both residents and employees from catching the H1N1 (Swine) Flu. Please note updates on both our town's website and in later articles in this newsletter."

Visit
www.westfordma.gov
for current news and information.

Dear Westford Residents,

Fall is here, and we have been fortunate to enjoy some beautiful autumn weather, with a spectacular show of foliage! In between leaf peeping, we coordinated and held our Fall Special Town Meeting on October 19, 2009, the results of which may be found on our website at www.westfordma.gov. Thank you to all who took the time out of your busy schedules to attend and help conduct the town's business.

The Town Manager's recommended budget for Fiscal Year 2011 was submitted to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee, who will be meeting with department heads and reviewing the proposed budget over the next several weeks. Although we have implemented several expense reduction measures town-wide, we remain concerned that the state will further reduce local aid to our town. On November 5th, State Senator Panagiotakos and State Representative Arciero articulated the state's fiscal crisis, and cautioned that further cuts should be expected for FY11. The Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee had a lively discussion about what further measures we could

take to maintain the level of services our residents expect, yet also preserve our town's stable financial position. Together we are committed to meeting all fiscal and other challenges we are presented with, and we will continue to recommend and take measures to control expenses town-wide.

The construction of the Cameron Senior Center continues according to schedule, and we are expecting to relocate into the newly expanded and renovated building this June. Construction began last week on the Town Hall, with a targeted completion date of September 2010. Many thanks to the members of the Permanent Town Building Committee and town staff who are doing such a great job of managing both of these projects.

Warren Sweetser, former Water Superintendent, retired after serving the town for 37 years in the Water Department. Although we are actively seeking a replacement, his contributions to the town will always be appreciated and remembered. A retirement party will be held for Warren at the

Outlook Restaurant at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, November 14th - which promises to be a great evening.

The Ronan McElligott Memorial Playground grand opening is scheduled for 2:00 p.m. on November 14th. This event is free and open to the public, and is the culmination of the remarkable efforts of Ronan's family, and the community as a whole. More information on this very worthy and inspiring project is available at <http://westford.com/ronansplayground/>.

Our Board of Health and town staff are working diligently to attempt to protect both residents and employees from catching the H1N1 (Swine) Flu. Please note updates on both our town's website and in later articles in this newsletter.

I wish you all a very healthy, happy Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,

Jodi Ross



HEALTH DEPARTMENT NEWS

Seasonal and H1N1 clinic scheduled

This week we received a very small quantity of H1N1 which we have been instructed by CDC and MDPH, must be allocated for the high risk priority groups. That includes pregnant women and parents of children under 6 months of age.

These groups are being targeted because statistically pregnant women have much higher rates of hospitalization and serious complications from both seasonal flu and H1N1 than the general population, and there is no vaccine licensed for children under 6 months.

Once we receive additional vaccine we will continue to expand the H1N1 vaccination effort to the following groups:

- healthcare workers
- children under 18

Next tier of priority groups:

- adults 19-24
- adults 25-64 with specific underlying medical conditions.

People age 65 and older are not included in the groups, because statistically there has been very little H1N1 illness in people 65 and over, and the limited doses are recommended to go to those who are most likely to get infected and become very ill. It is very important that seniors, who are at a greater risk of developing complications from the **seasonal** flu, get a seasonal flu shot and obtain a pneumonia shot if they have not had one previously.

Clinic date and time for Westford residents only:

Saturday Nov 14, 2009

Time:	11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Location:	Westford Academy Gym
Eligibility to receive:	See below

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**HEALTH DEPARTMENT NEWS***Continued from page 2.***SEASONAL VACCINE**

Vaccine will be available for the *general population* on a first-come, first-served basis. Doses will be allocated according to the following criteria:

- **LIVE NASAL FLUMIST:** administered to anyone aged 2-49 who have no history of asthma or any underlying medical conditions.
- **INACTIVATED FLU SHOT:** administered to pregnant women, and those 4 and older who are ineligible for FLUMIST

H1N1 VACCINE

We received a very small quantity of H1N1 vaccine. At this time the vaccine will be administered only to the following 2 high risk groups on a first-come first-serve basis:

- *Pregnant women*
- *Parents who have children who are under 6 months of age*

We will add clinics and expand the priority groups when vaccine is available. Please continuously check information on www.westfordma.gov. We will post additional clinics on that site.

Celebrate With Care

As we enter a busy holiday season, Westford Against Substance Abuse (WASA) encourages the residents of Westford to make the most of holiday celebrations. **Celebrate With Care.** The holiday season is a period of overwhelming responsibilities, bustling activity, increased stress and magical moments of joy, anticipation and wonder.

In our society, traditionally, consumption of alcohol and celebrations go hand in hand. Anyone can experience problems when drinking alcohol. We all make choices about how much and how often we consume. Alcohol is a depressant. Use may affect cognitive ability, coordination and physical health. During a season when energy levels need to be high, stress levels tend to rise and social opportunities abound. We need to keep in mind the importance of **celebrating with care.**

Look for bookmarks with tips for hosting a fun, successful party. Cards with recipes for non-alcoholic beverages and other holiday ideas are available at Fletcher Library, Millennium School, Westford Police Department and Roudenbush Community Center. For more information, call Tina Grosowsky, Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator, at 978-399-2528, tgrosowsky@westfordma.gov.

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT NEWS

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Food Safety Tips for Healthy Holidays

Parties, family dinners, and other gatherings where food is served are all part of the holiday cheer. But the merriment can change to misery if food makes you or others ill.

Typical symptoms of food-borne illness are stomach pain, vomiting, and diarrhea, which often start a few days after consuming contaminated food or drink. The symptoms usually are not long-lasting in healthy people—a few hours or a few days—and go away without treatment. But food-borne illness can be severe and even life-threatening to those most at risk:

- older adults
- infants and young children
- pregnant women
- people with HIV/AIDS, cancer, or any condition that weakens their immune systems

Combating bacteria, viruses, parasites, and other contaminants in our food supply is a high priority for FDA. But consumers have a part to play, too, especially when it comes to food handling in the home.

1. Clean: The first rule of safe food preparation in the home is to keep everything clean.

- Wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food. " Wash food-contact surfaces (cutting boards, dishes, utensils, countertops) with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item and before going on to the next item.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water and use a produce brush to remove surface dirt.
- Do not rinse raw meat and poultry before cooking.

2. Separate: Don't give bacteria the opportunity to spread from one food to another (cross-contaminate).

- Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood and their juices away from foods that won't be cooked while shopping in the store, and while preparing and storing at home.
- Consider using one cutting board only for foods that will be cooked (raw meat, poultry, and seafood) and another one only for ready-to-eat foods (such as raw fruits and vegetables).
- Do not put cooked meat on an unwashed plate that has held raw meat.

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT NEWS*Continued from page 4.*

3. Cook: Food is safely cooked when it reaches a high enough internal temperature to kill harmful bacteria.

- Use a food thermometer to make sure meat, poultry, and fish are cooked to a safe internal temperature. To check a turkey for safety, insert a food thermometer into the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. The turkey is safe when the temperature reaches 165°F. If the turkey is stuffed, the temperature of the stuffing should be 165°F. Make sure oysters in oyster dressing are thoroughly cooked.
- Bring sauces, soups, and gravies to a rolling boil when reheating.
- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm. When making your own eggnog or other recipe calling for raw eggs, use pasteurized shell eggs, liquid or frozen pasteurized egg products, or powdered egg whites.
- Don't eat uncooked cookie dough, which may contain raw eggs.

4. Chill: Refrigerate foods quickly because harmful bacteria grow rapidly at room temperature.

- Refrigerate leftovers and takeout foods within two hours.
- Set your refrigerator no higher than 40°F and the freezer at 0°F. Check both periodically with an appliance thermometer.
- Never defrost food at room temperature. Food can be defrosted safely in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave. Food thawed in cold water or in the microwave should be cooked immediately.
- Allow the correct amount of time to properly thaw food. For example, a 20-pound turkey needs four to five days to thaw completely when thawed in the refrigerator.
- Don't taste food that looks or smells questionable.



Clerk Notices

Voter registration deadline for December 8, 2009 primaries.

Nonvoter residents who are US Citizens and will be 18 years of age on or before December 8, 2009 must register to vote by 8:00pm on Wednesday, November 18, 2009 to vote in the Democratic, Republican or Libertarian primaries. Registered voters who wish to change party affiliation must do so by the November 18th deadline as well. If you are an unenrolled (formerly known as Independent) voter, then you may choose the party ballot that you wish to vote on election day because you are not affiliated with a particular party. All other voters may only receive the ballot of their party. Please note that Green Rainbow and Working Families have changed from political parties to political designations and will not be holding primaries. Please call the Town Clerk's Office if you have a question about your party enrollment, or check online at: www.westfordma.gov/voter.

Absentee Voters for December 8, 2009 primaries and January 19, 2010 elections.

If you will be out of town (that means anywhere outside of the town boundaries) between the hours of 7:00am and 8:00pm on December 8, 2009 or if you are unable to get to the polls, you may cast an absentee ballot for the upcoming primaries. The process is to apply for the ballot in writing (this may be done by the voter or a family member). You may use an application form available from the Town Clerk's Office, at <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleifv/howabs.htm> or simply send us a request with the voter's name, voting address, and mailing address for the ballot and we will send a ballot to you. You may also apply in person and vote at the counter. The deadline to apply for an absentee ballot is noon on Monday, December 7th and ballots must be returned to the **Town Clerk's Office** (not to the polls) by 8:00pm on Election Day. Please contact the Town Clerk's Office with questions at 978-692-5515 or townclerk@westfordma.gov. Absentee ballots are usually available at least 21 days prior to an election.

2010 Dog Licenses are now available

Get a jump start on your 2010 to do list and buy your dog's 2010 license now! All we need is a current rabies certificate and check for \$15.00 (waived if dog owner is 70 or older) payable to Town of Westford along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you renew or apply by mail. License your dog in person at the Town Clerk's Office between 8:00am and 4:00pm, Mon. – Fri. We are currently located behind the Abbot School at 23 Depot Street (Millennium Building). Find more information on our dog licensing page: www.westfordma.gov/clerk/dog

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**Clerk Notices**

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Leaf Pickup

Acme Waste Systems will be collecting leaves Saturday, November 14th and December 5th. The cost is \$1.25/bag with a minimum charge of \$20.00 per pick up. Call the Town Clerk's Office at 978-692-5515 to register for the Saturday(s) you would like Acme to stop at your house.

Put your leaves, grass clippings and pine needles into paper leaf bags and have them at the curb by 7:00am on Saturday morning.

You will pay Acme directly by attaching a check payable to "Acme Waste Systems" to one of your leaf bags on collection day

White goods/appliance pickup

Trash items that are not burnable, from appliances to gas grills, sinks and toilets, may be disposed of through a monthly curbside collection (usually on the third Saturday of the month). The next pickup is scheduled for November 21st.

A \$30 sticker is required per item from the Town Clerk's Office (payable to Atlas Recycling Service). The deadline for buying stickers is NOON on the Friday before the pickup and the item(s) needs to be curbside by 7:00am on the pickup date. Check the recycling brochure (<http://www.westfordrecycles.org>) for other options to dispose of non-burnable items.



Medicare Changes and More

Medicare beneficiaries who have questions about their Medicare options for 2010 should plan to attend an event on how Medicare is changing for 2010, sponsored by the Council on Aging with Serving the Health Information Needs of Elders, known as SHINE. Some may have to take action to ensure that they have the correct coverage for 2010. Some Medicare Advantage Plans are being dropped. Learn what is happening with Prescription Advantage. Medigap plans are increasing premiums. What guidelines are changing for extra help? This event will help answer these questions.

Plan to attend on Thursday Nov. 19 at 1 PM at the Senior Center, 10 Church St., Graniteville with the entrance at the rear of the United Methodist Church. RSVP by calling the COA at 978 692-5523. Refreshments will be provided by Life Care Center of Nashoba Valley.

It is time to review health and prescription insurance coverage. Prescription Part D plans should be reviewed every year. Prescription Drug Insurance plans change what they cover and how they cover prescriptions. Some plans drop out of the Medicare Program, premiums increase and co-pays change.

Changes can be made from Nov. 15 to Dec. 31 for upcoming 2010.

The SHINE Program provides health insurance counseling services to the elderly and disabled adults. The program is administered by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs in partnership with hundreds of social service community based organizations. To speak with a SHINE Counselor, contact the COA to arrange an appointment at 978 692-5523.

Fuel Assistance intake began on November 1, 2009 for new applicants. Call the COA at the above number to receive information on what materials you need to bring with you for your appointment. Previous applicants should have received recertification applications in August, completed and returned them to C.T.I. If you need help with the recertification application contact us for an appointment at 978 692-5523. To determine the status of your submitted application contact C.T.I. at 978 459-6161 and have your Social Security number available.

Holiday Day Basket applications for families in need are available by calling us at 978 692-5523. We are still in need of organizations or individuals to provide for families at the holiday time. Holiday donor applications are available at the Senior Center by calling 978 692-5523.

Highway Department

The Highway Department has been busy this Fall Season getting our equipment ready for snow and ice operations. All of our sand & salt has been stockpiled in our sheds and the snow plows have been reattached to the trucks and thoroughly tested. We have also installed snow fence in many fields around Westford to help contain drifting snow from traveling into the roadways. The Highway Department Crews have also prepared Town Hall so it can be turned over to the Renovation Contractor, who started work during the 1st week of November.

Did you know that Westford has a Beaver problem?!? The Westford Highway Department spends an extensive amount of time, this time of year controlling our little friends' Engineering activities, which occur nightly, 7 days a week! In an effort to secure the integrity of our infrastructure, the Department is continuously checking approximately 12 locations in town, so as to maintain an acceptable level of dammed up water. That being said, we would like to remind everybody to not feed the Beavers (please!).

As November starts and the leaves have finally come off the trees, any help that residents could provide us by cleaning off the top of any storm drain covers within your neighborhood would be greatly appreciated. It's also a good time to mark the edge of your property with plow stakes to help our Operators see the edge of the pavement during snow plow operations. Lastly, the Highway Department would like to remind residents that the Towns' Parking Ban is effective November 1st

AND ...

Acme Waste Systems will be collecting leaves **Saturday, November 14, and December 5.** The cost is \$1.25/bag with a minimum charge of \$20.00 per pickup.

Please contact the Town Clerk's office at 692-5515 to register for the Saturday(s) you would like Acme stop by your house.

Put your leaves, grass clippings and pine needles into paper leaf bags and have them at the curb by 7 a.m. Saturday morning.

You will pay Acme directly by attaching a check payable to Acme Waste Systems to one of your leaf bags on collection day.

No brush please.

Best wishes to all for health and happiness during the upcoming Holiday Season!



As we approach Thanksgiving and Christmas, the Assessor's Office is busy accepting and processing various exemptions for the elderly and veterans. Our values and growth have been approved by the Department of Revenue. The town's total taxable value is down slightly from last year and growth is down by about 60% from last year. There has been little activity with new construction and renovations. However, next year is looking optimistic. There are new developments that have been started and more to be approved.

Classification Hearing will be November 10, 2009. This is the time when the Board of Selectmen, not the Board of Assessors, sets the annual tax rate for FY 2010. As the Principal Assessor, I will be providing the Selectmen with updated information relative to the town's assessments and market condition. Most of the RECAP submitted to the Department of Revenue will have been completed waiting for the last piece to be done, which is setting the tax rate by the Selectmen. The first decision they will make is whether or not to adopt the Single Tax rate (which has been done consistently for the last 15+ years); or to adopt a Split Tax rate. Splitting the tax rate would shift some of the tax burden from residential to commercial, industrial and personal property. Once this first portion is done, they will vote whether or not to add any of the tax exemptions. There are three of them. Residential Exemption (This is relevant for towns where there a larger amount of non-owner occupied dwellings and is not the case in Westford.); Open Space Exemption (This applies to towns that have a specific land use for Open Space and Westford does not.); Small Commercial Exemption (This has been applied by the Selectmen for the last 6 years, shifting the tax burden within the commercial class.) Commercial properties over a million dollars will pay more than those under a million dollars. Once the Classification Hearing is done and the Selectmen have decided on a tax rate, the final documents will be sent to the Department of Revenue for final approval and certification. The third quarter tax bills will be finalized, sent to the printer and mailed by the end of December or by January 1. A new calendar year will start and the process begins all over again for the next fiscal year.

Recreation News

The dedication of the Ronan McElligott Memorial Playground will take place on Saturday, November 14 from 2-4PM. The playground is a fully accessible playground allowing children of all abilities to play. Stephanie and Steve McElligott along with the help and support of many people, local businesses, and the Town have made this vision a reality. The public is invited to enjoy refreshments and have fun at the grand opening.

The playground is located at Edwards Beach off Williams Avenue and has limited parking. Parking has been arranged at the Nabnasset School and a shuttle bus will operate to the beach from 1:30-4PM

The department's newest program WA Crew Club completed its first season of competition and placed first in the State Championship Regatta in the Boys Novice 4 division. The program under the leadership and coaching of Ken Gifford, entered four boats finishing first, third, fourth, and seventh; the Girls Novice 4 boats finished fifth and tenth in their division. The club competed in a number of regattas throughout the fall and will finish up the season with the Merrimack Chase Regatta November 15 in Methuen, MA